



ON THE FIRST BENEDICTINE HALLMARK: LOVE OF CHRIST AND NEIGHBOR

By Dr. Bill Thierfelder

**“THIS IS MY
COMMANDMENT:
LOVE ONE
ANOTHER AS I
HAVE LOVED YOU.”**

(JOHN 15:12)

“Benedictine life, like that of all Christians, is first and foremost a response to God’s astonishing love for humankind, a love expressed in the free gift of his beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Love, the motive for monastic life and its goal, tops St. Benedict’s list of tools for good works...” (ABCU

My Captain!”, written by Walt Whitman in 1865, expresses the love and gratitude that I feel



*But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.*

*O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear
the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for
you the bugle trills;
For you bouquets and ribbon’d wreaths—
for you the shores a-crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their
eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head;
It is some dream that on the deck,
You’ve fallen cold and dead.*

*My Captain does not answer, his lips are
pale and still;*

“BENEDICTINE COLLEGES SEEK, ABOVE ALL, TO BE GROUNDED IN LOVE AND TO BE ANIMATED BY IT.”

Statement - *Education within the
Benedictine Wisdom Tradition*)

Benedictine colleges seek, above all, to be grounded in love and to be animated by it. The love of learning and desire for God so celebrated as part of Benedictine culture are hallmarks of these colleges and of Belmont Abbey College in a special way.

More than 125 of our monks have laid down their lives for those who have lived, worked, studied, and prayed here. They have welcomed us into their home and taught us, by their example, how to love one another. One of my favorite poems, “O Captain!

for all the monks of Belmont Abbey who have given their lives to preserve this College and monastery. I think that many of those who have benefited from knowing our monks feel the same kind of devotion toward them that Whitman expresses in his memorable tribute to the fallen Abraham Lincoln.

*O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip
is done;
The ship has weather’d every rack, the
prize we sought is won;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people
all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the
vessel grim and daring;*

*My father does not feel my arm, he has no
pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor’d safe and sound, its
voyage closed and done; From fearful
trip, the victor ship, comes in with object
won;
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.*

We owe the monks of Belmont Abbey a great debt, and I pray that by loving one another we can repay their kindness and be worthy of their sacrifice. “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for a friend.” (John 15:13)